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Note-Book and Longfellow's *Journal*, it is quite certain that these are only coincidences; but that the two works should run parallel in so many details, and in such important details as some of them are, is none the less remarkable. It may be, moreover, that our poet was familiar with the Old-French story, and admired it for its simple beauty; for, despite its vein of keen ridicule, it is just such a pretty little tale as would strike his fancy. This may help to explain his eagerness to appropriate a similar plot as soon as one presented itself on American soil. His long studies in general literature, his frequent stays in Europe, and his intercourse with European men of letters, lend color to the suggestion.

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THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF 'Dunce.'

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS:—Etymologists tell us that the word *dunce* originated in the phrase *Duns man*, *Duns-man*, to denote a follower of *Duns* (*Dunse*, *Dunce*) whose full name was *John Duns Scotus*. The epithet was probably applied in the first instance by his philosophical opponents, the Thomists, or followers of Thomas Aquinas. Presently it came to mean any sophistical opponent, and so degenerated to its common signification, 'a dull, obstinate person.'

The *Century Dictionary* refers to Tyndale for the primary meaning, but offers no quotation, except a definition of the Italian word *Scotista*, from Florio's *A Worlde of Wordes*.

I have come across the word in its original sense in Marston's comedy, *What You Will*, printed in 1607. Marston is describing the research into *An sit anima?* Whether there be a soul, and if so, what are its nature and attributes:—

Lampatho. "I was a scholar: seven useful springs
Did I deflower in quotations
Of crossed opinions 'bout the soul of man.
The more I learnt the more I learnt to doubt:
Knowledge and wit, faith's foes, turn faith about.

Simplicius. "Nay, come, good Senior, I stay all the

gentlemen here. I would fain give my pretty
page a pudding pie."

Lampatho. "Honest epicure! Nay, mark, list, Delight.
Delight, my spaniel slept, whilst I boused leaves,
Tossed o'er the *dunces*, pored on the old print
Of titled words; and still my spaniel slept;
Whilst I wasted lamp oil, 'bated my flesh,
Shrunk up my veins; and still my spaniel slept.
And still I held converse with Zabarell,
Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw
Of antique Donate; still my spaniel slept.
Still on went I; first, *an sit anima?*
Then an it were mortal. O, hold, hold!
At that they're at brain-buffets, fell by the ears
A main pell-mell to-gether; still my spaniel
slept.
Then whether 'twere corporeal, local, fixt,
Ex traduce, but whether 't had free will
Or no, ho, philosophers
Stood banding factions, all so strongly propt,
I staggered, knew not which was firmer part,
But thought, quoted, read, observed, and pried,
Stuff noting-books; and still my spaniel slept.
At length he waked, and yawned, and, by yon
sky,
For aught I know, he knew as much as I."
What You Will, Act ii, Scene 1.

The quotation is interesting, not only because it presents a common word in its very uncommon first meaning—I know of no other instance of this usage—but because it furnishes a good illustration of the satiric style of the dramatist. *What You Will* is Marston's most pleasing play. I may add that in this same act and scene, *Lampatho*, the speaker, is called Don Kynsader, which identifies him with Marston himself.

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BRIEF MENTION.

We are glad to know that some of our Naval Officers do good work in addition to their routine service. Surgeon T. B. Stephenson, U. S. N., has lately furnished translations from several Russian publications. Dr. Stephenson made use of his opportunities to advantage in gaining a practical knowledge of the language of this nation—so rapidly growing in strength and influence. Dr. Stephenson is a member of the *Société d'anthropologie de Paris* and of *The Asiatic Society of Japan*, Tokyo.